



Media Release

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OREGON PUC APPROVES INCOME-QUALIFIED UTILITY DISCOUNT TO BENEFIT AVISTA CUSTOMERS

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved Avista’s program to offer income-qualifying residential customers an ongoing discount to their monthly bills. To qualify, customers must be at or below 60 percent of the state median income (SMI) level.

House Bill 2475, passed during Oregon’s 2021 Legislative Session, gave the PUC authority to consider the financial burden of energy costs when making decisions about rates, bill credits, and program discounts for customers of investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities. This bill, known as the Energy Affordability Act, allows the PUC to consider equity in the ratemaking process to make energy more affordable for all Oregonians.

“Historically, income was not considered in energy rates,” said Megan Decker, PUC Chair. “This program will help provide relief to families who typically pay a higher percentage of their income to cover the cost of necessary utility services. We appreciate the collaboration among Avista, many organizations representing customers, and PUC Staff to deliver a strong program and significant discount.”

The monthly bill discounts are calculated as a percentage of the bill and are offered at four levels based on total household income when compared to the SMI level. View the current [Oregon SMI energy assistance eligibility matrix](#) to determine eligible discount level. Additionally as part of this program, Avista is providing assistance for customers between 60 and 80 percent of the SMI level who are experiencing a hardship and need temporary assistance with their natural gas bill.

Total Household Income	Percentage of Bill Discount
At or below 5% of SMI	90% discount
6 - 20% of SMI	60% discount
21 - 40% of SMI	25% discount
41 - 60% of SMI	15% discount

Individuals who have received energy assistance through state or federal assistance programs in the last two years will be automatically enrolled in the program at the lowest discount tier. Starting October 1, 2022, those wishing to apply for the monthly bill discount or believe they qualify for a higher tier, as well as those wanting to be considered for temporary hardship assistance should contact their local Community Action Agency or Avista at

myavista.com/about-us/our-community/assistance-programs or call (800) 227-9187. At the time of enrollment, the customer will be asked to declare their household size and qualifying income in order to be placed in the appropriate discount level. Avista customers with past due balances who qualify for the monthly bill discount may also qualify to have that balance forgiven, depending on their approved discount level.

Avista has deferred the costs of this program and has elected to not recover the costs through an increase in customer rates until more information is available to inform a rate adjustment.

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The PUC regulates customer rates and services of the state's investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities, including Portland General Electric, Idaho Power, Pacific Power, Avista, Cascade Natural, and NW Natural. The PUC also regulates landline telephone providers and select water companies. The PUC's mission is to ensure Oregonians have access to safe, reliable, and fairly priced utility services that advance state policy and promote the public interest. We use an inclusive process to evaluate differing viewpoints and visions of the public interest and arrive at balanced, well-reasoned, independent decisions supported by fact and law. For more information about the PUC, visit oregon.gov/puc.